

## 1408<sup>th</sup> meeting, 30 June 2021

10 Legal questions

### 10.5 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

b. Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action contained in the Committee of Experts' fifth evaluation report on the Slovak Republic

**Item to be considered by the GR-J at its meeting on 15 June 2021**

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been classified restricted at the date of issue. In accordance with the Deputies' decision (CM/Del/Dec(2001)765/10.4), it will be declassified after examination by the Committee of Ministers.

## Introduction

1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as “the Charter”) is a treaty of the Council of Europe putting obligations on its States parties to protect and promote the country’s traditional minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. The Charter was ratified by the Slovak Republic on 5 September 2001, entered into force on 1 January 2002 and applies to the following languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Ruthenian, Ukrainian (Part II and Part III) and Yiddish<sup>2</sup> (Part II, non-territorial language). In a declaration registered at the Secretariat General on 27 November 2015, the Slovak Republic recognised Russian and Serbian as minority languages present on its territory, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

2. The Committee of Experts monitors the implementation of the Charter. Each State party shall present a periodical report on the implementation of the Charter every five years. Based on the full evaluation report by the Committee of Experts, the Committee of Ministers formulates its recommendations to the State party.

3. In the mid-term of every five-year monitoring cycle i.e. two and a half years after the due date of its periodical report, the State party must present information on the implementation of every **recommendation for immediate action**<sup>3</sup> that the Committee of Experts has made in its evaluation report. The Committee of Experts then adopts an evaluation of the implementation of these recommendations. “Further recommendations” by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in the State concerned are examined after reception of the next periodical report and the on-the-spot visit to the State party. Five-yearly periodical reports shall contain comprehensive information about the implementation of all Charter undertakings and all recommendations by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers.

4. The Slovak Republic was expected to present **information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** contained in the Committee of Experts’ fifth evaluation report<sup>4</sup> by 1 January 2021; this information was submitted on 15 December 2020. This **evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** is based on the information received from the authorities of the Slovak Republic as well as from associations representing regional or minority language speakers pursuant to Article 16.2 of the Charter.<sup>5</sup> As far as compliance of the Slovak Republic with all its undertakings under the Charter is concerned, the Committee of Experts refers to its fifth evaluation report. The Committee of Experts will examine the implementation of all of the recommendations concerning all of the minority languages in the next evaluation report.

5. This evaluation was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 22 March 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> See under Yiddish, paras. 47-48 below, and in the Fourth report on the Slovak Republic, CM(2016)38, paras. 74-76. The issue will be decided at the sixth monitoring round by the plenary Committee of Experts.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with Committee of Ministers Decisions “*Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*” (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e), para. 1.a.

<sup>4</sup> CM(2019)126

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Experts (MIN-LANG(2019)7), Rule 17, paras. 1-6.

## **Examination of the implementation by the Slovak Republic of the recommendations for immediate action**

### **I. General issues**

#### **Implementation of recommendations in co-operation with regional or minority language speakers**

6. The present evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action contained in the Committee of Experts' fifth evaluation report on the Slovak Republic refers to a total of 15 recommendations concerning 10 out of 11 minority languages examined with regard to the Charter provisions. The Committee of Experts has not received sufficient information to fully assess the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action with regard to nine languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Polish, Romani, Ruthenian, Serbian, Ukrainian and Yiddish. Education and use of minority languages in relations with and within Slovakian administration and public services were of particular concern at the end of the fifth monitoring cycle in December 2018. By addressing recommendations for immediate action to the Slovakian authorities, the Committee of Experts was convinced that corrective measures were needed and feasible in both fields, and in a relatively short timeframe by means of competent authorities' resolute actions in co-operation with the speakers.

7. After consideration of the Information Document by the Slovak Authorities on the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action (MIN-LANG (2020) IRIA5, hereafter referred to as Information Document), the Committee of Experts can only regret that the Slovakian authorities have not indicated whether they had consulted the Committee for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups and/or individual national minorities about the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action since the adoption of the fifth evaluation report.<sup>6</sup> The Committee of Experts stresses that, in conformity with Articles 6 and 7.4 of the Charter, it is equally as necessary to have the views of the users of regional or minority languages included in the State's periodical report as it is in the Information Document on the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action.<sup>7</sup>

8. The Committee of Experts reminds the authorities that recommendations made in the framework of the monitoring procedure aim at supporting and accelerating the full implementation of the Charter. Considering Article 6 and 7(4) of the Charter, the Committee of Experts invites the Slovakian authorities, at the time of publication of an evaluation report or an evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, to inform the representatives of the minority language speakers of the recommendations by the Committee of Ministers and the Committee of Experts, to take language-specific measures based on these recommendations and to implement them in co-operation with the speakers. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts reiterates that the authorities should include the views of the representatives of the minority language speakers in their periodical report and in the Information Document on the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action.<sup>8</sup>

9. Regular contacts and consultations with the speakers are necessary to implement the undertakings under the Charter by the State party. The objective of the recommendations for the authorities to co-operate with the speakers is to come to the best possible solutions in protecting and promoting minority languages,<sup>9</sup> especially if the national legislation imposes elevated thresholds for the use of minority languages, as is the case in the Slovakian municipalities.

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<sup>6</sup> CM(2019)126.

<sup>7</sup> CM(2020)166, Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action contained in the Committee of Experts' seventh evaluation report on Hungary, paras. 6 and 7; MIN-LANG (2019) 18, Sixth Report of the Committee of Experts presented to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 16 of the Charter on Croatia, para. 70.

<sup>8</sup> See above.

<sup>9</sup> CM(2019)126, para. 20.

## Thresholds for the use of regional or minority languages and the 2021 census

10. In its fifth evaluation report, the Committee of Experts pointed out, similarly to in its previous reports, that since 1999, despite various amendments to the Act No. 184/1999 Coll. on the Use of Languages of National Minorities, the Slovakian legislation and in particular the practice not to promote or admit the use of minority languages in municipalities where less than 20% of permanent residents belong to a national minority have been de facto excluding most minority languages from protection under Article 10 of the Charter.<sup>10</sup> In their comments on the fifth evaluation report, the Slovakian authorities provided information on “[...] an improvement in the use of national minority languages in the case of municipalities for each national minority. [...] [The Slovakian authorities] consider the tasks related to Art. 10 to be partially (in connection with information from the Report on the Use of Languages of National Minorities in the SR for the Period 2017-2018) or formally fulfilled.”<sup>11</sup>

11. The Committee of Experts estimates that, in the Slovak Republic, the results of the next 2021 census will be of particular importance for regional or minority language speakers as the national legislation foresees to lower the above-mentioned threshold to 15%, on the condition that two consecutive censuses since 2011 confirm permanent residence of persons belonging to a national minority in some administrative areas. Although the Committee of Experts does not consider thresholds to be favourable to regional or minority languages in any State party, it looks forward to receiving, in the next periodical report, information on positive changes in the official and practical use of protected languages in the Slovak Republic following the 2021 census.

12. The Committee of Experts asks the Slovakian authorities to carefully analyse census results, to complement them with sociolinguistic surveys or by collecting, in co-operation with the speakers, data concerning the number of users of minority languages and their geographic distribution. The Committee of Experts continues to encourage all States parties to the Charter to determine, in co-operation with the speakers, in what areas regional or minority language speakers are traditionally present in sufficient numbers for the purpose of the undertakings entered into under Article 10, irrespective of thresholds, and apply the undertakings ratified under Article 10 in those areas on a sustainable basis.<sup>12</sup> The geographical extent of the use of minority languages in the Slovak Republic will be examined by the Committee of Experts during the sixth monitoring cycle, in light of the Committee of Ministers’ last recommendation on the practical use of the Part III languages in the field of administration irrespective of thresholds.<sup>13</sup>

## Education and the teaching of and in regional or minority languages

13. Recommendations for immediate action below concern the teaching of and/or in Croatian, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian, but also two other languages only covered by Part II, i.e. Serbian and Yiddish. Most of the recommendations for immediate action ask for co-operation with minority language speakers; this is regrettably lacking, as stated above. Specific issues are dealt with under each language concerned, but a whole range of information contained in the Information Document applies to the majority of the above-mentioned languages.

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<sup>10</sup> See above, paras. 16–19, and contribution of the Slovak Ministry of the Interior in MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5: in practice, at present, only Hungarian and Ruthenian minorities benefit from the possibility to use their language in the meaning of Article 10 of the Charter.

<sup>11</sup> See above, MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, Appendix II

<sup>12</sup> See the Committee of Experts approaches aiming at the implementation of Article 10 of the Charter, irrespective of national minority thresholds as to Part III regional or minority languages spoken in other States parties e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> Report on Montenegro, MIN-LANG(2020)1, para. 60; 2<sup>nd</sup> Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina, ECRML (2016) 3, para. 173; 3<sup>rd</sup> Report on Serbia, ECRML(2016)1, para. 14-15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Report on Ukraine, ECRML (2014) 3, para. 17-19. Following the recommendations of the Committee of Experts to Germany (e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> Report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, ECRML (2014) 6, para. 197), there is currently an approach to apply the Charter and use the Lower Sorbian language, without reference to censuses, in some localities included on a fixed list of municipalities - see <https://bravors.brandenburg.de/gesetze/swg>

<sup>13</sup> Recommendation CM/RecChL(2019)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Slovak Republic, point 1.

14. The Committee of Experts welcomes several regulatory steps taken by the Slovakian authorities to reinforce the position of and information on minority languages in Slovakian schools at various levels of education.<sup>14</sup> It took note with interest of the authorities' plans and supportive measures for the years 2020-2024, and the adoption of various framework school curricula relating to minority languages. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has allocated funds for the development of national minorities' education within the preparation of the draft budget for the years 2021–2023. From 2021, it plans to implement, as an initial solution, a development project entitled 'Support for the teaching of the mother tongue of the national minority at primary and secondary schools' that will concern Croatian, Polish, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, and Romani.<sup>15</sup> In this context, the Committee of Experts draws the attention of the Slovakian authorities to its educational toolkit on classroom activities<sup>16</sup>. It looks forward to receiving exhaustive information on the practical effects of the provisions adopted in the next periodical report by the Slovak Republic.

### **Use of regional or minority languages during the Covid-19 pandemic**

15. Bearing in mind its statement on online education,<sup>17</sup> the Committee of Experts wishes to thank the Slovakian authorities for the information provided with regard to exceptional measures taken in 2020 in the context of school closures during the Covid-19 outbreak. On 28 April 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic issued first guidelines on the content and organisation of the education of primary school pupils during that time and released the material of the State Pedagogical Institute<sup>18</sup> entitled 'Content of education at primary schools during the extraordinary interruption of teaching at schools' and included the following languages: German, Hungarian, Romani, Russian, Ruthenian and Ukrainian; other guidelines followed.<sup>19</sup> The difficulties arising from the conversion from face-to-face teaching to online education do not generally depend on the language of instruction. According to the Committee of Experts, it might be that classes of and in minority languages are in an unfavourable situation compared to classes in the State language/s. In all States Parties to the Charter, there are significantly more alternative audiovisual education materials available in the State language/s from various official and unofficial sources, and materials used in the kin-States are often not compatible with the national curricula applied to national minorities. The Committee of Experts will pay attention to the new challenges in education with respect to the teaching of and/or in regional or minority languages and will welcome lessons drawn from the 2020/2021 health crisis in the next periodical report by the Slovak Republic.

16. Concerning communication on health conditions and appropriate protective measures during the Covid-19 pandemic, Hungarian speakers complained to the Committee of Experts about insufficient relevant information in their language.<sup>20</sup> According to the authorities, basic information and regulations concerning the health crisis were posted on national authorities' websites in German, Hungarian, Romani, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian.<sup>21</sup> The Committee of Experts welcomes the Slovakian authorities' initiative to provide minority language speakers with online hygiene recommendations and rules. However, according to the Charter, regional or minority languages should be used in all contexts and, therefore, regional and local authorities should also actively use regional or minority languages in their response to the pandemic. The communication of relevant recommendations in all minority languages is important for the health and well-being of the speakers of regional or minority languages. In line with the statement issued by the Chair of the Committee of Experts in March 2020, the authorities' efforts to communicate in languages other than the State language/s at all stages of the pandemic are particularly welcome.

<sup>14</sup> See about the State Educational Programme (SEP) as amended in November 2019 in MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, under the contribution of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.; as well as <https://www.statpedu.sk/sk/publikacna-cinnost/ucebne-texty/>

<sup>15</sup> MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, under the contribution of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

<sup>16</sup> Brohy C., Climent-Ferrando V., Oszmianska-Pagett A. and Ramallo F., (2019), European Charter for regional or Minority Languages. Classroom activities, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

<sup>17</sup> COMEX statement on RMLs in online education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - News about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (coe.int)

<sup>18</sup> English names of Slovak institutions and bodies appear here as they were communicated to the Committee of Experts by the Slovakian authorities in their Information Document.

<sup>19</sup> MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, under the contribution of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

<sup>20</sup> COMEX expresses concern over lack of RML communication during health crisis - News about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (coe.int); Communication in RMLs of utmost importance in global medical crises - News about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (coe.int)

<sup>21</sup> COVID-19 | Splnomocnenc vlády pre národnostné menšiny (gov.sk); <https://korona.gov.sk>

## II. Recommendations for immediate action

### 1. Bulgarian

#### Recommendation for immediate action

**Implement Article 10 for Bulgarian, in co-operation with the speakers and in accordance with the undertakings ratified, irrespective of thresholds.**

#### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

17. The Information Document by the Slovakian authorities does not contain information related to the recommendation above. Bulgarian speakers have not communicated on the matter either.

#### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

18. The Committee of Experts reminds the Slovakian authorities that no undertaking under Article 10, apart from Article 10.5 on family names in Bulgarian, was considered fulfilled at the fifth monitoring cycle.<sup>22</sup> In view of the lack of information, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Bulgarian speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

### 2. Croatian

#### Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Provide for teaching Croatian in pre-school, primary and secondary education as an integral part of the curriculum.**
- b. **Implement Article 10 for Croatian in co-operation with the speakers and in accordance with the undertakings ratified, irrespective of thresholds, and increase the visibility of Croatian in public signage.**

#### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

19. The Slovakian authorities provided information on the measures taken with a view to preparing the introduction of Croatian into the school curricula. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic co-operates with a lecturer from the Republic of Croatia to this end. Some progress was reported on the development of important elements of the school curricula with regard to the first years of compulsory schooling.<sup>23</sup>

20. As far as the recommendation for immediate action relating to Croatian and Article 10 is concerned, the Information Document by the Slovakian authorities<sup>24</sup> does not contain information related to this particular recommendation. Croatian speakers have not communicated on the matter either.

#### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

21. The Committee of Experts welcomes the fact that the Slovakian authorities, in co-operation with Croatia, have initiated substantial efforts in terms of the development of school curricula content and budget programming for the years 2021-2023 concerning the teaching of Croatian in pre-school and primary education. It encourages further efforts aimed at the secondary education level, and above all, the practical introduction of Croatian as an integral part of the curriculum into Slovakian public pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools in the municipalities where Croatian speakers live in sufficient numbers. The objective of such efforts should be to improve the level of compliance with the Slovakian undertakings under Article 8, most of which were considered not fulfilled in the fifth evaluation report.

<sup>22</sup> CM(2019)126, paras. 16-18, evaluation table under chapter 2.1.1, Article 10.

<sup>23</sup> See MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, under Croatian language; see also para. 14.

<sup>24</sup> See above.

22. The Committee of Experts reminds the Slovakian authorities that no undertaking under Article 10, apart from Article 10.5 on family names in Croatian, was considered fulfilled in the fifth monitoring cycle.<sup>25</sup> In view of the lack of information, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Croatian speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

### 3. German

#### Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Extend teaching German as a minority language at pre-school and primary level with a view to covering all areas where there is a sufficient number of German speakers.**
- b. **Increase the visibility of German by using it in public signage, including place names.**

#### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

23. The Slovakian authorities reported on the stabilisation of German teaching “in localities where the German national minority lives”. The Information Document underlines the added value of multilingualism and provides information about the related conference on multilingualism that was organised for the second time in co-operation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, in May 2019, in Bratislava. Apart from the development of important elements of the school curricula for the first years of German teaching in Slovakian schools, information provided concerns B1, B2 and C1<sup>26</sup> levels of proficiency in German for secondary school graduates.

24. As far as the recommendation for immediate action relating to the use of German in public signage is concerned, information provided concerns two municipalities - Kunešov/Kuneschhau and Krahule/Blaufuß - where the place name signs and local authorities’ office signs are also in German.

#### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

25. The Committee of Experts welcomes the information that the Slovakian authorities have stabilised the teaching of German in Slovakian schools, but is not in a position to differentiate whether it concerns German as a minority language or as a foreign language.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, it would welcome more precise data, in the next periodical report, on the teaching of German as a minority language at pre-school and primary level in all areas where there is a sufficient number of German speakers. Such information is important for the purposes of the Charter and would enable the Slovakian authorities to better implement this recommendation.

26. Concerning the implementation of Article 10.2.g for German, the Committee of Experts notes that the information provided repeats already known facts<sup>28</sup> and does not add new elements on the compliance by the State party with this commitment (assessed as partly fulfilled). In light of this, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the German speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

### 4. Hungarian

#### Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Increase the use of Hungarian in public signage, within the meaning of Articles 7.1.d and 10.2.g of the Charter.**
- b. **Ensure that secondary and technical and vocational education remains available in Hungarian, in all areas where the language is used.**

<sup>25</sup> CM(2019)126, paras. 16-18, evaluation table under chapter 2.2.1, Article 10.

<sup>26</sup> See CEFR levels - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, Council of Europe.

<sup>27</sup> CM(2019)126, para. 53.

<sup>28</sup> See above.

### **Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities**

27. Concerning the use of Hungarian in public signage, within the meaning of Articles 7.1.d and 10.2.g of the Charter, the Information Document adds some concrete elements to the data available at the fifth monitoring cycle, such as 13 forms relating to trade business and three forms relating to registry agenda. As a result of a recent measure by the Ministry of Transport, bilingual signs were placed, by 31 December 2019, at 54 railway stations in areas where the Hungarian national minority exceeds 20% (see paras. 10-12 above). The same applies to safety information on Slovakian railways, which is provided, according to the authorities, “on an ongoing basis within the available resources”. The Railway Company of Slovakia uses Hungarian (if the operating staff speaks this language), in addition to the State language, when communicating at railway stations, contact centres, trains and on the infoline.

28. As far as secondary and technical and vocational education in Hungarian is concerned, the Slovakian authorities stated that teaching in Hungarian is still available in all regions of the Slovak Republic where Hungarian is used. The authorities added that “ensuring or maintaining a network of secondary schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction [is] in the full competence of their founders”. None of these schools were closed in 2019-2020. During the Covid-19 pandemic, online education had been working in the Hungarian schools, despite some difficulties in adapting teaching methods and content, due to the lack of appropriate teaching materials.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

29. After consultation with the speakers, the Committee of Experts welcomes the introduction of the measures relating to the use of Hungarian at selected railway stations although they are based on the 20% threshold. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving information in the next periodical report on public signage in various minority languages in areas where the minority language speakers do not meet the 20% threshold but live there in sufficient numbers. It also appears that safety information in Hungarian is rare and that the Slovakian Act on the Use of Minority Languages does not mention public transportation as an area where minority languages can be used. Train timetables, departures announcements at railway stations and in trains are in Slovakian only because the national railway company staff does not have a sufficient command of Hungarian even in towns with a Hungarian majority, for example Komárno/Komárom and Štúrovo/Párkány, and in bilingual towns with a Slovakian majority, for example Nové Zámky/Érsekújvár, Galanta/Galánta, Senec/Szenc, Rožňava/Rozsnyó, etc. Consequently, the Committee of Experts encourages the Slovakian authorities to further support the use of Hungarian within the meaning of Articles 7.1.d and 10.2.g of the Charter, especially as public service staff is concerned.

30. With regard to the recommendation for immediate action concerning secondary and technical and vocational education in Hungarian, the Committee of Experts welcomes the fact that the closing of schools teaching in Hungarian at these levels was stopped and that substantial efforts were made to consider schools and classes with the language of instruction of national minorities when developing new framework curricula with effect from 1 September 2021. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving information on the impact of new school curricula at schools teaching in Hungarian, in the next periodical report.

## **5. Polish**

### **Recommendations for immediate action**

- a. **Introduce teaching Polish as an integral part of the curriculum within pre-school, primary, secondary and technical and vocational education in areas identified, in co-operation with the speakers.**
- b. **Implement Article 10 for Polish, in co-operation with the speakers and in accordance with the undertakings ratified, irrespective of thresholds.**

### **Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities**

31. In their Information Document, the Slovakian authorities stated that the Polish speakers in the Slovak Republic had so far not expressed their wish to benefit from the teaching of Polish in Slovakian schools at any level of education. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic planned, however, to support the development of the Polish language as the mother tongue of the Polish national minority through the ‘Support for the teaching of the mother tongue of the national minority at primary and secondary schools’ project from 2021. The Ministry would start official negotiations with interested parties after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

32. Regarding the recommendation for immediate action relating to Article 10, the Information Document by the Slovakian authorities<sup>29</sup> does not contain relevant information related to this particular recommendation. Polish speakers have not communicated on the matter either.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

33. The Committee of Experts welcomes the Slovakian authorities' intention to support Polish as a minority language in the Slovak Republic, bearing in mind the low level of compliance with the Slovakian undertakings relating to Polish under Article 8 (most of the commitments being deemed not fulfilled). However, all of the Charter's Part III articles should be read in light of Part II Objectives and principles pursued in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, and in particular Articles 6 and 7.4 ("take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the speakers"). With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Polish speakers in order to thoroughly examine and understand their wishes, and that they communicate them to the Committee of Experts in the next periodical report.

34. The Committee of Experts reminds the Slovakian authorities that no undertaking under Article 10, apart from Article 10.5 on family names in Polish, was considered as fulfilled in the fifth evaluation report.<sup>30</sup> In view of the lack of information, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Polish speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

## **6. Romani**

### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**Extend teaching Romani at pre-school, in primary, secondary, technical and vocational education as an integral part of the curriculum, in co-operation with the speakers.**

### **Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities**

35. The Information Document adds a public primary school to the list of schools where Romani is taught. This school was founded by the municipality in the district of Svidník. Romani teachers can now use a relatively new didactic material entitled Basics of the Romani language for pedagogical staff of schools. Since the academic year 2019/2020, more Romani teachers have been trained at the University of Prešov for primary and secondary schools. There are five private schools where Romani is taught and one private secondary vocational school in Kežmarok. No information is provided on pre-schools. The Committee of Experts received information from the Romani speakers on the new Platform for Romani Studies at the university in Nitra.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

36. The Committee of Experts wishes to thank the Slovakian authorities for the additional information provided and welcomes their efforts to train more Romani teachers in line with the latest recommendation by the Committee of Ministers.<sup>31</sup> It encourages further steps aimed at pre-school level, and above all, practical introduction of Romani as an integral part of the curriculum into Slovakian mainstream pre-schools, primary and secondary levels, and technical and vocational education in the municipalities where Romani speakers live in sufficient numbers.

<sup>29</sup> See above.

<sup>30</sup> See above, paras. 16-18, evaluation table under chapter 2.6.1, Article 10.

<sup>31</sup> Recommendation CM/RecChL(2019)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States. on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Slovak Republic, point 3.

## 7. Ruthenian

### Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Extend the offer of Ruthenian at pre-school and primary level and make available a substantial part of education in Ruthenian in secondary, technical and vocational education.**
- b. **Strengthen the use of Ruthenian in relations with the administrative authorities and public services, in co-operation with the speakers and in accordance with the undertakings ratified, irrespective of thresholds, and encourage such use in practice and increase the visibility of Ruthenian by using it in public signage, including place names.**

### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

37. In their Information Document, the Slovakian authorities detailed that for the school year 2020/2021, the teaching of Ruthenian has been extended to two primary schools in Medzilaborce. Apart from the development of important elements of the school curricula for the first years of Ruthenian teaching in Slovakian schools, information provided concerns plans to prepare target requirements for the knowledge and skills in Ruthenian for secondary school graduates. It also lists updated programmes at pre-school, primary and secondary levels as implemented by the Slovak Methodological and Pedagogical Centre.<sup>32</sup>

38. Concerning the use of Ruthenian in public signage, the Information Document reaffirms the fifth monitoring cycle findings,<sup>33</sup> and recalls in particular a relatively recent measure by the Ministry of Transport that resulted in placing bilingual signs, before 31 December 2019, at one railway station where the number of inhabitants belonging to the Ruthenian national minority exceeds 20%. Regarding the use of Ruthenian in contacts with the administrative authorities, information from the Slovakian national authorities underlines frequent oral use of the language at local level but not in writing due to no requests being made by the speakers.

### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

39. The Committee of Experts commends the Slovakian authorities for extending the teaching of Ruthenian at primary school level and for other steps taken. It would also welcome information in the next periodical report on the position of Ruthenian in secondary and technical and vocational education as well as on the impact of new school curricula at schools teaching Ruthenian or in Ruthenian. Such information is important for the purposes of the Charter and would enable the Slovakian authorities to better implement this recommendation.

40. As regards strengthening implementation of Article 10 for Ruthenian, the Information Document does not add new elements to the information previously available. In light of this, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. It looks forward to receiving information in the next periodical report on public signage in various minority languages in areas where the minority language speakers do not meet the 20% threshold but live there in sufficient numbers. With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Ruthenian speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

## 8. Serbian

### Recommendation for immediate action

**Start developing, in co-operation with the speakers, a structured approach for the protection of Serbian.**

<sup>32</sup> MIN-LANG(2020) IRIA 5, contribution by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport – Ruthenian language.  
NB. English names of Slovak institutions and bodies appear here as they were communicated to the Committee of Experts by the Slovakian authorities in their Information Document.

<sup>33</sup> CM(2019)126, para. 57.

### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

41. The Information Document by the Slovakian authorities does not contain information related to this particular recommendation. The Serbian speakers provided information about a lack of any activities taken with a view to implementing this recommendation. They emphasised that a proactive approach from the authorities would be crucial for the protection of the Serbian language and related cultural institutions such as museums or libraries.

### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

42. In view of the available information and with regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Serbian speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

## 9. Ukrainian

### Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Increase the number of kindergartens and schools making available a substantial part of pre-school, primary, secondary and technical and vocational education in Ukrainian.**
- b. **Increase the presence of Ukrainian in the media (broadcasting media, audiovisual works, newspaper, online media).**

### Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities

43. The Information Document by the Slovakian authorities states that the number of schools for the Ukrainian speakers has been stabilised and that the decreasing tendency in the numbers as described in the fifth evaluation report has been stopped.<sup>34</sup> Better conditions regarding school curricula, textbooks, and qualified teachers have been established for schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction or with the teaching of Ukrainian as a subject. Ukrainian speakers have not communicated on the matter.

44. As far as the recommendation for immediate action relating to Ukrainian and Article 11 is concerned, the Information Document by the Slovakian authorities does not contain information related to this particular recommendation. Ukrainian speakers have not communicated on the matter either.

### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

45. The Committee of Experts welcomes the information that the Slovakian authorities have stabilised the number of schools with the teaching of and in Ukrainian. However, it would welcome more precise data in the next periodical report on the teaching in Ukrainian as a minority language at all levels of compulsory education. Such information is important for the purposes of the Charter and would enable the Slovakian authorities to better implement this recommendation.

46. In view of the lack of information relating to media in Ukrainian, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate the implementation of the recommendation. It recalls that three relevant undertakings under Article 11 were considered not fulfilled at the end of the fifth monitoring cycle – Articles 11.1.bii (private radio), 11.1.cii (private television) and 11.1.ei. (one weekly or daily newspaper in Ukrainian), and three others were deemed partly fulfilled - Articles 11.1.a.iii (public broadcasters); 11.1.d and 11.1.1.fii (audiovisual works and productions).<sup>35</sup> With regard to the Charter, it is important that the Slovakian authorities enter into dialogue with the Ukrainian speakers and take appropriate measures towards implementation of this recommendation.

## 10. Yiddish

### Recommendation for immediate action

**Identify, in co-operation with the speakers, domains where Yiddish can be promoted and take proactive steps to facilitate and encourage its use in these domains.**

<sup>34</sup> See above, para. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Report on the Use of Languages of National Minorities in the SR for the Period 2017-2018 as adopted in May 2019 mentions programmes broadcasted on public radio and television, three print periodicals, and four non-periodical press in Ukrainian as supported under the grant programme Culture of National Minorities 2017 and within the Fund for the Support of Culture of National Minorities in 2018.

### **Implementation measures taken by the Slovakian authorities**

47. The Information Document stresses that Yiddish is not included on the list of languages to which the Charter applies in the Slovak Republic pursuant to the Slovakian instrument of ratification and relevant successive declarations by the State party. The Jewish national minority in the Slovak Republic does not use Yiddish, but the modern form of Hebrew, Ivrit, and it is possible to learn Ivrit at language courses organised by the speakers.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

48. During the fourth monitoring round, the Committee of Experts found that there were 460 Yiddish speakers in the Slovak Republic according to the 2011 census.<sup>36</sup> In view of this information, the Committee of Experts concluded that Yiddish is one of the traditionally spoken minority languages and therefore covered by Part II of the Charter. In accordance with Article 2.1, the Charter applies to all regional or minority languages spoken within the territory of the State party as explained in paragraph 39 of the Explanatory Report to the Charter. The Committee of Experts asks the Slovakian authorities to clarify the situation in their next periodical report.

### **Communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, while acknowledging the efforts the Slovakian authorities have undertaken to comply with their undertakings under the Charter, has in its fifth evaluation report (CM(2019)126) made “recommendations for immediate action” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in the Slovak Republic.

In accordance with the Committee of Ministers Decisions of 28 November 2018 (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e), the Slovak Republic had to present information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, which contain the priority measures that should be taken by the State party. The Slovak Republic presented this information on 15 December 2020. In the present evaluation, the Committee of Experts has examined the implementation of these recommendations.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, the Committee of Experts invites the Committee of Ministers to:

1. take note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action by the Slovak Republic and invite the Slovakian authorities to disseminate it to the competent national authorities and relevant stakeholders;
2. reiterate its Recommendation CM/RecChL(2019)5 and invite the Slovakian authorities to present their next periodical report by 1 January 2024 in the required format.

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote No 1 above. Fourth report on the Slovak Republic, CM(2016)38, paras. 74-76.